employees with effect from the date they complete three years of service in the newly acquired temporary status.

(b) The number of full time casual labourers in Sultanpur District (Uttar Pradesh) is 43. The number of such casual labourers given temporary Group 'D' status is 43.

(c) part time casual labourers in Sultanpur District have not been given temporary Group 'D' status since the Scheme is not applicable to part time casual labourers. They are being paid wages based on the number of hours of their engagement.

(d) Does not arise in view of reply of (a) and (c) above.

International Optical Fibre Network of VSNL

5371. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the VSNL has signed MoU with a U.S. company to participate in the International Optical Fibre Project;

(b) if so, the cities which will be beneficial in India out of that International Optical Fibre Network; and

(c) the commercial viability of the business plan, the cost implication and the design details of the International Optical Fibre Network?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The benefits of the International Optical Fibre Network will accrue to all the domestic telecom operators who will be connected to it.

(c) The commercial viability of the business plan is being worked out. The cost implications as mentioned in the non-binding MoU entered into by VSNL with M/s CTR group, is US $ 10 million. The international fibre project called "Project Oxygen" is a global optical fibre network comprising of 1,58,000 kms. of optic fiber cable with 101 terminal points in 74 countries. The minimum capacity available on every segment is 320 Gbps and going upto terabits separately on certain segments.

Opening of National Long Distance Services

5372. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the norms prescribed by Government for issuing licences to private